THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

P.O. BOX 8 KING, ONT., CANADA

Vol. 2. No. 2. February, 1963.

This issue is a little late. Our apologies. Both Jim Kinnear and myself do quite a bit of travelling, and this month we have both been away a lot.

The renewals are almost all in. Almost everyone has renewed. It is very gratifying to us to have so many of you with us again.

This issue contains page three of the article "Ragtime - An Excavation". This issue also contains the reprint of the article on Max Morath in the February 22nd. edition of "Time". Jim Kinnear has collected some very interesting information for this issue that has been contained in your letters. Bob Darch has sent us an interesting clipping. This issue also contains news about our latest sheet music.

We ran a short article on what constituted copyright law in a recent newsletter. We were unaware of certain changes that were made in the U.S.A. apparently in August of last year. Several people were good enough to write us about them, and briefly the story is this:-

For some time, composers, publishers and others have been trying to extend the effective length of time of copyrights. The U. S. Congress in August granted an additional three years extension to renewals which would normally have expired in August 1962. This means that those numbers which might have expired may now be renewed for a further three years. Whether renewal is automatic or must be applied for, we do not know. If we are not correct in our assumptions, we would appreciate corrections, as our future music reprinting endeavours will be somewhat affected. Until further notice we will not reprint any sheet music that was published after 1906.

PERSONALITIES

Bob Darch sent an interesting clipping. It concerns a performer, Manny Smitty. We have reprinted it for you, along with the Max Morath article from "Time".

jazz. (*Temptation Rag* is in C minor).

The melodic content also derives mainly from the march; there is certainly nothing of the ballad in it. There was always a tendency among the lesser rag composers however to abandon melody altogether, and use instead merely repetitive rhythmic figures; to descend in fact to what we should nowadays call riffing. The ragtime rhythms are actually strikingly similar to the rhythms used in the ensemble riffs of the swing bands: swing in some respects represents the rejection of the blues and a harking-back to ragtime.

★ ★ ★

The all-important *Maple Leaf* was still eluding me. Luckily I now succeeded in tapping this, so to speak, at the source. Prowling round the publishers I discovered that Darewski's owned the British rights, though they had never printed it. Had they a file copy? They hunted, and produced one, mercifully in the unpolluted original arrangement. After a little persuasion they agreed to supply me with a manuscript copy on payment of the copyist's fee, and presumably they will do likewise for anyone else who is sufficiently interested.

Maple Leaf (published 1899) certainly deserves its reputation as the best of all rags. It was almost the earliest, and in many ways was never surpassed. The usual introduction is missing—the piece starts with a sharp one-two right into the first strain, and doesn't flag for a bar throughout the four strains. It deserves a lengthy description, if only there were any point in trying to describe music in words. It's a crime that no adequate recording of the piece exists, but anyone who knows a pianist should certainly endeavour to get hold of the sheet music.

In one advertisement I have seen from around 1905, the publishers of *Maple Leaf* boasted 'One million copies sold, and no abatement in demand'. I hope it was true—it deserved to be.

★ ★ ★

The two best-known ragtime pianists were Tom Turpin and Louis Chauvin, both of whom were flourishing well before Joplin put the music on paper. The playing of these two men must surely have been outstanding for its memory to have subsisted to the present day; unfortunately neither could read music, and so no record of their playing has been preserved, nor do we know whether their repertoire consisted of the popular tunes of the day, ragged versions of classical and other well-known tunes, or solely their own speciality numbers; it is certain that there were no standard rags in their day.

Several numbers by Tom Turpin were published (having presumably been notated from his playing by a publisher's accomplice), and in the printed version seem very uninspired. I have seen it stated that his *Harlem Rag* was the first rag published; but this piece is a straight March-and-cake-walk, and not a rag at all—evidently the form had not then become fixed.

Louis Chauvin was a friend of Joplin; I hypothesise that Joplin got many of his ideas from the playing of Chauvin, who could not notate them himself. The only fact I have in support of this theory is that *Heliotrope Bouquet* was published in 1903 as a collaboration between Joplin and Chauvin, and it looks a typical Joplin number.

After Joplin the most noted rag composer was James Scott, among whose compositions were *Kansas City Rag, Hilarity Rag, Heart's Longing, Frog Legs Rag, Ophelia Rag, Grace and Beauty, Great Scott Rag,* and *Ragtime Betty.* I have however never heard any of his compositions in the original version. I have seen it stated that *Frog Legs Rag* is one of Bunk Johnson's favourite numbers.

Another first-class rag composer is Arthur Marshall (composer of *The Swipesey Cake-Walk* and *Kinklets*). His excellent *Ham And* is 'respectfully dedicated to my friend Scott Joplin'.

Many pieces by these three composers were published by the Stark Music Co. of St. Louis, the most famous rag house. Other more-or-less well-known rag composers were E. L. Catlin, Clarence H. St. John, Bud Marchant, Edwin F. Kendall, Theron C. Bennett, Jim Europe, J. Russell Robinson, and E. J. Stark (described by the Stark Music Co. on their cover as 'a Highly Cultured Musician'!) And the early jazz pianists Rube Bloom, Frank Signorelli and Arthur Schutt had all published so-called rags.

★ ★ ★

What did ragtime really sound like? A strongly rhythmic piano solo in steady march tempo, enlivened by unexpected, almost irresponsible syncopations; much of the atmosphere of the barrelhouse. You can get a good idea by listening to a 'ragtime-type' pianist like James P. Johnson,

FOLK SONGS

Rag Peddler

Oh go 'way, man, I can hypnotize dis nation,
I can shake de earth's foundation wid de Maple Leaf Rag!
Oh go 'way, man, just hold yo' breath a minnit,
For there's not a stunt that's in it, wid de Maple Leaf Rag!
—Maple Leaf Rag Song (1903)

Ragtime began hypnotizing the nation about the time the Gay Nineties became gay, and it disappeared years before the Stanley Steamer and the suffragette. It might still be gone if it were not for the efforts of a Sedalia, Mo., piano peddler named John Stillwell Stark and an entertainer and pianist named Max Morath. Stark had the good sense to start publishing classic Negro rags like *Maple Leaf Rag* and *Sunflower Slow Drag* in 1899 when he was in late middle age; last year Morath, 36, began playing the rags on television—and has become a sort of folk hero of the spreading ragtime cult.

BOB DOEPPERS

RAGTIMER MORATH
Git on boa'd, little chillun!

As played in the honky-tonks and brothels of Sedalia at the turn of the century, ragtime would have won neither sponsors nor the approval of Newton Minow. A derivative of the Negro spiritual, it opposed a syncopated right hand to a marching bass, and it talked, as one wag observed, of the six days of the week the spirituals ignored.

Morath's bowdlerized ragtime first appeared on a television show called *The Ragtime Era*, for the National Educational Television Center. Morath now has 15 half-hour shows, *Turn of the Century*, in which he mixes snatches of cultural history into a formula of songs, monologues and lantern slides. A thin, volatile man, he usually noodles out the music first on the piano, then talks about the men who wrote it and of the day when ragtime was the "folk music of the city."

Morath now plays about 50 college dates a year, and sometimes holds after-show clinics for scholarly ragtime buffs. Morath himself was playing *The Maple Leaf Rag* on the piano before he could read; his mother was a silent-film pianist in Colorado Springs.

What draws people to ragtime, Morath thinks, is that "it is happy music; it speaks of a time of tranquillity, reform, consolidation and harmony in our national life." He is particularly pleased that his audiences are so young. "If I found that only the tag end of another generation was interested," says Morath, "I'd have dropped it long ago." Which means:

Git on boa'd, little *chillun!*
Git on boa'd, big *chillun!*
Git on boa'd, all *de chillun!*
Dere's room fo' many a mo'!

LONG ISLAND PRESS, FRIDAY, JANUARY 25, 1963

Dining Out

'Ragtime' Celebrates At Travelers Hotel

By GEORGE DOURIS

Manny (Ragtime) Smitty of Jamaica, pianist at the Travelers Hotel near La-Guardia Field in Jackson Heights, this week is celebrating his 55th year in show business.

Now 70, Smitty was born in Los Angeles and landed his initial job in show business at Mike Chatham's Inn in Manhattan's famous Chinatown. On the same bill with him were Irving Berlin, featured there as a singing-waiter, and a pianist named Jimmy Durante.

Smitty never took a piano lesson in his life . . . but he's a member of ASCAP with more than 150 tunes to his credit, including a national hit on the bistro circuit: "Don't Shoot the Bartender, He's Half Dead Now."

Many of Ragtime's friends are planning to visit the Travelers this week and wish Smitty another 55 years in show business.

* * *

RECORDS

"The Complete Piano Rags of James Scott", as played by Knocky Parker.

Those of you who now possess "The Complete Works of Scott Joplin", also by Knocky Parker, will appreciate what an epic this latest release by Audiophile Records is. We have not yet heard this set, but its appearance is imminent, and by the time you receive the newsletter the record will be available from Audiophile Records Inc., Saukville, Wisconsin, for $10.00 post paid (2 records).

In a recent exchange of correspondence with Trebor Tichenor, he brought out an interesting point that I would like to cover here. Most of you remember that two issues ago I reviewed Treb's record. At that time I stated that it was not Ragtime but Dixieland. I don't know about you, but if there is one thing that grinds me, it is the bad habit the uninformed have of calling all rickey-tick music "Ragtime". I know we all work constantly to help the people we meet come to realize what Ragtime really is. This all relates to Treb's record - for it is not Ragtime per se, but it is also not "Dixieland". Treb plays a New Orleans style on this record and plays it well. Treb can and does play Ragtime well. My apologies Treb, for calling your excellent New Orleans playing - Dixieland.

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

We thought you would like to share with us some of the information that we receive in the letters sent to us.

Joe Smith, who was at one time our youngest subscriber, is now 14 and therefore no longer the youngest. Joe keeps up a very active correspondence with us, and we have him to thank for putting us on to "Searchlight Rag", "Gladiolus", and a few others. Joe's latest letters have been written to us in pencil (with suitable apologies), and we learned that he was recently in a tussle with a car, that he came out second best and is now recuperating in hospital with a broken leg. Joe's address is 17 School Lane, Scarsdale, N.Y., and those of you who care to write to him will undoubtedly be able to cheer him up.

Tom Shea of Detroit, in addition to being recently bitten by the Ragtime bug, is a composer. Mike Montgomery (Mike of the roll collection) tells us that Tom is a very capable player, and that we may expect some developments in the not too distant future.

Wilbur Jacobs of Traverse City, Michigan, sent us a newspaper clipping of his two sons, both of whom are in the Navy band. This is quite unusual, as it is seldom that two members of a family are in the Navy School of music at the same time. They have played extensively in various Dixieland bands, and why not, with Pop's interest in Ragtime!

Douglas Henderson of 1645 Wisconsin Avenue N.W., Washington 7, D.C., whom we recently neglected to include in our list of "player piano members", writes that he too has recently composed "Bulldog Rag, dedicated to Wally Rose". He has made a master roll of his composition which has been sent away to be duplicated. We look forward to hearing

the roll and will review it in our newsletter as soon as possible. Doug has quite an extensive business on rolls, player pianos, music boxes, and other rare oddities. An illustrated brochure will be sent to any of you who write him at the above address.

Max Morath is probably the person to-day doing the most in the cause of Ragtime. This TV series is currently running over the National Educational Television network, and we hope many of you are able to see this series of programmes. A photograph of Max which appeared in the Buffalo Evening News almost a month ago (and possibly in other papers), was sent to us by Bill Pardue. The accompanying article has this to say, "..... I don't feel education has to be divorced from entertainment techniques" said Max, who is 35 and the father of 3, "but there is a split between the education and the broadcasting sides of educational television on that subject. This series isn't entirely music, the way the Ragtime Era was", Morath said, "I interlard music with my commentary . Each show is on a distinct topic - humour, the temperance movement, women's rights, immigration, the transportation revolution, motion pictures, courtship, the rise of the cities, and so forth. I include the songs of the times as they relate to the topics. This isn't a series that goes back just for the sake of nostalgia. I'm hooked by the era around the turn of the century, just as I am by Ragtime. It was a period during which most people thought a four-letter word was a three-letter word in plural. The idea behind the series is to show how many tremendous changes occurred then - in kind, not in degree".

Max and his wife researched the entire series, and there is no denying that the one show on Ragtime is the gem so far as he's concerned. "It represents 25 years of a music that's been overlooked", he said. "People laugh when I tell them this, but Classic Ragtime isn't the honky tonk music you hear to-day. It's a delightful music, and I think that as more and more people are exposed to it in its classic form, it will grow in popularity."

Dave Pope of Vallejo, California, writes that when his wife spotted the "Ragtime Era" listed on a Fringe Channel, the picture was non-existent, and the sound noisy. So, being a man of action, and not to be put off by such minor details, Dave went out, bought a tall mast, powerful antenna, rotor, and beamed for the fringe channel. "And there was Max in a repeat of the 'Mauve Decade' ". Dave catches all Max' programmes, and says he has the "Norelco" (?) at the ready in case more turn up. You're lucky Dave, we can't get a mast high enough here to see them.

James J. Fuld, 300 Park Avenue, New York 22, N.Y., writes that he will purchase sheet music - popular and classical - for the period before 1895, preferably as early as possible, and more preferably, about 1800. If any of you have what Mr. Fuld is looking for, why not write him.

Ray Fortier of Dover, N.H., asks if we would be interested in a Discography of Fats Waller's. Ray has offered it to us for reproduction if enough of you are interested.

SHEET MUSIC

We often wonder how much Classic Ragtime sheet music is lying on publishers' shelves gathering dust; not listed in catalogues; not known by collectors to be available, and generally speaking, lost, to all intents and purposes. One of our better correspondents, Joe Smith, (see under "From the Secretary's Desk") wrote us sometime ago that he thought Joplin's New Rag and Searchlight Rag were available from a certain New York publishing house. After much correspondence we were eventually able to obtain a supply, and those of you who ordered them must have subsequently noticed that other classic rags were also listed. After a further bit of correspondence, we were able to obtain and can now supply Scott Joplin's GLADIOLUS RAG at 80¢.

We had intended to print "Gladiolus" this year. However, since it is not our desire to print anything if it can be obtained commercially, we consider that we were fortunate in finding this one which is truly one of Joplin's masterpieces. This brings me back to my opening statement - how much more is lying around? If you know of classic rags which we do not now list, but which can be obtained from a publisher's stock, please tell us, and we will make every endeavour to include it in our own stock.

On the same list which includes "Gladiolus", several others are shown. Among these was Joplin's "Stoptime Rag", which we have not been able to obtain. We wonder if pressure could be brought to bear on the publisher to bring it out. If enough of you want "Stoptime", and will write to the publisher asking for it, we might be able to get copies. In that a publisher presumably would rather sell a large quantity to one individual, we might suggest that if you do write, mention the Ragtime Society. We will follow it up.

We were able to obtain a few copies of Eli Green's Cakewalk, Koninsky, Perpetual Rag, Stone, and Music Box Rag, Luckyth Roberts.

We are currently working on others from the same publisher. Watch this space next month for further announcements.

There have been some changes which will no doubt affect our future reprinting programme. However, this month the reprints are:

> Scott Joplin's "Easy Winners", first published in 1901.
> Tom Turpin's "Bowery Buck", arranged by D. S. Delisle, published in 1899.

These two rags have now been printed, in line with our new non-delay policy, and are available at $1.00 each, postpaid.

As mentioned in earlier issues, we also have the following Ragtime Society reprints still available at $1.00 each:

Joplin:	ORIGINAL RAGS	Scott:	FROG LEGS RAG
	ELITE SYNCOPATIONS		KANSAS CITY RAG
	SUNFLOWER SLOW DRAG		
	SWIPESY CAKEWALK		

Turpin: ST. LOUIS RAG
HARLEM RAG

Lamb: SENSATION RAG
Wenrich: THE SMILER

Shepherd: LIVE WIRES RAG

Krell: MISSISSIPPI RAG

Next issue we are going to reproduce an article entitled "Ragtime" by Charles Payne Rogers. This article was originally published in Vol. 1, No. 1 of JAZZ, December 15th., 1944. We are indebted to Bill Mitchell who loaned us this magazine to reproduce. We are sure many of you have old articles, magazines, or clippings which everyone would like to read. If so, we would really like to have the opportunity to make them available to everyone. Please let us know if there is anything we could use.

See you all next month.

John A. Fisher,
Chairman.

Stop the Press News

Following is our assessment of the questionnaire which we recently sent out to everyone.

Just over 100 were returned, which was considerably less than half the number sent out. 74% own a piano and 75% play the piano. 10 of these classed themselves as professional. Slightly over a third of the above pianos are player pianos, and many people indicated their intention to purchase a player, and a similar number are interested in acquiring rolls of one type or another.

Possibly the most surprising, and yet most satisfactory statistic is that 86% of those returning the questionnaire are solidly behind our sheet music reprinting programme. Thanks for what amounts almost to an ovation, as well as all the remarks of encouragement. 70% buy our sheet music to use, while the other 16% listed themselves as 'collectors' primarily. Reading between the lines, we think that there are a large number of people, who themselves do not play an instrument, but who are anxious that our work continue to survive, so that the music may be provided for others not yet subscribers. Everyone who owns a piano (and presumably buys sheet music) tells us that $1.00 is a fair price for our reprints. We concur, since an envelope, a stiffener and the postage amount to about 25 ¢. Exactly 100 people, of those returning the questionnaire, agreed with our choice of rags, and 4 did not agree, but did not offer any suggestions. One person only asked why we are bothering to reprint "the common ones".

Our question as to the most desireable size for the sheet music, was either ambiguous or misinterpreted by many. 15 people asked for the 12" x 35" spreadout type, while 37 people asked that it be left as it is.

76% are interested in acquiring L.P.'s and 61% in L.P.'s of piano rolls. We mentionned the Brun Campbell Record because we felt that most of you would have it or at least have heard it. Paul Affeldt put this record together from ancient acetates, and although the quality of sound certainly leaves a lot to be desired, Brun is no longer with us to remake the record. His own inimitable style comes through the background noise quite satisfactorily and we felt that if we could do as well or better (but no worse) we would have fulfilled our obligation. Only 3% rated quality first.

The results of our questions regarding tapes and recorders were not as definitive as the above, and we were unable to accurately gauge the response.

Thanks for returning the questionnaires. The above results will give us a basis on which to work out our future programming, and we'll announce results as they become available.

Late Flashes

It occasionally happens that we receive a sudden rush of late news immediately after we have gone to the printer. Because there has also been a delay in our addressing and mailing department, there has been time to get out an extra page. We trust you will have noticed that we have now standardized our method of addressing envelopes, and with this improvement, we will now proceed onward to greater things, with vigah.

PLAYER PIANO ROLLS: We have just received the March list of new roll releases from QRS. Included is # 9889, That Ticklin' Rag, by Mike Bernard, and
Intro Climax Rag, by James Scott.

NEW SUBSCRIBERS: Among quite a flood of mail from overseas we have a letter from Neville Dickie of London, who has contributed 6 ragtime folios to the Society Library. These folios which are of varying ages were all printed for sale in England only, and presumably were never available for sale in Canada or the U.S.A.....we're checking. Mr. Dickie writes: "You might be interested to know that just before Xmas I won the London heat of the National Jazz Piano Contest. (I played my own arrangement of Swipesy Cakewalk.) There were 11 of us in the National Final - 9 were modernists, one played Boogie, and I played Ragtime." The first prize was a trip to New Orleans, and the next 2 prizes were pianos! We haven't heard of very many similar contests over here lately.
Our mail has been fairly heavt lately from Sweden, Austria and Denmark.

THE RAGTIME REVIEW: This excellent mimeographed quarterly has embarked on its second year of publication, as we have. We wish them continued success. The Review originates in St. Louis, Missouri, and is co-edited by Trebor Tichenor, and Russ Cassidy. Trebor's name has appeared frequently in our newsletter mainly in connection with his excellent work with the St. Louis Ragtimers. Russ deserves an equal amount of space because of his efforts towards making the Ragtime Review a success. Those of you who do not know of the Review will find the content of its 10 to 12 pages excellent reading, and although there is some duplication in our respective efforts, the amount of overlap is small, and we are both working towards the same end. The Ragtime review contains very good analyses of the classic rags as well as other articles of general interest to ragophiles. This quarterly will bring you a lot of information for the sum of ONE dollar per year. Send it to Russ Cassidy, 1050 Grenoble, Florissant, Missouri, and tell him we sent you. His job is as equally unpaid as ours.

The SECOND LINE. Those of you who look a little more broadly at the field of popular music would do well to investigate this excellently prepared magazine. The Second Line is the Official organ of the New Orleans Jazz Club. Information may be had by writing the Club at 2417 Octavia Street, New Orleans 15, La.

Treemonisha: If any of you are interested in Treemonisha please contact us. We hope to have details in the course of the next couple of weeks.